

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 14 West Point and Annapolis Stories

By J. Edward Leithead



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 111

SATURDAY LIBRARY

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## The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 14 West Point and Annapolis Stories

(conclusion)

By J. Edward Leithead

"Aroused like a wildcat and struggling like a madman at the uncomprehended motive of the attack, Jabez was soon the center of a big brawl.

"It's Faraday! Hey! Look!" began Chauncey in ringing tones and paused.

"By the blood of Bruce, it's not him!" yelled McFatricks.

"It was Jabez, their tool, delivering such smarting blows, unsteady as he was—because he was big and powerful—that his nettled victims returned the assault with interest. The Crestfallen, duped, dismayed plotters saw their hireling pelted, hammered, tossed, flung bodily from academy precincts as a disgraced intruder. A stray officer passing in a vehicle saw the scrimmage. Jabez Prescott was bundled off to the city police station.

"What does it mean

"That question the three conspirators asked one another a dozen times during the next dozen hours. What had happened to Clif Faraday? How had Jabez come to wear the tramp disguise? Dejected and worried, the plotters made many an anxious inquiry for Clif Faraday that evening. But night came and taps sounded, and no word from the missing naval cadet. Clif Faraday had disappeared!

Meanwhile—

"Faraday, uniquely secured in the Prescott barn, looked grim. The naval cadet realized the utterly hardened character of his captors. Human nature was the same the world over—at Annapolis as in Cuba."

Below in the barn the elder Prescott has been awaiting Jabez's return from the academy. He doesn't arrive, but a policeman stops in at the barn to tell the old man his son is in trouble, locked up at headquarters. Prescott leaves to bail out Jabez. Clif has been working for some time to free himself and succeeds.

"When he came down from the loft and went outside it was to greet the dusk. Clif cautiously rounded the barns, found them empty, and turned his attention to the old mansion, in a portion of which the Prescotts must have their living quarters. Its main part was shattered, crumbling, boarded up. On one side, however, was a wing that looked more habitable. This must be the domicile of his enemies, and they lived here alone.

"The door was locked, but a window had been left open. Clif was promptly over its sill. 'I'll never have a clearer field to investigate this old den of mystery,' reflected Faraday. 'Now, where to begin?'

"They were ordinary living rooms, and he penetrated them all without discovering any trace of the man he had reason to believe was a prisoner, more or less, of the Prescotts. 'The man they call Lane, the cripple's father, is not in this part of the house,' was Clif's comment to himself. 'Another thing, I can discover no connection of this wing with the old structure. That of course is the likely point to hunt. An ideal place for hiding a victim or captive. Perhaps now—'

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"Clif halted and lifted the candle he had lighted over his head. A step ladder stood against the wall of a high room. It rested just under a big portrait, framed in oak. This was doubtless some picture formerly gracing the walls of the mansion, but why put it in here Clif could not understand.

"As he studied it, however, Clif made a discovery that impelled him to ascend the ladder and make a closer inspection. The picture was not hung but hinged, and its other edge had a slide snap of steel.

"I fancied this," mused Faraday, atop the ladder and feeling over the catch. 'A door!'

"It was just that, and a heavy one, and it pulled open so hard against some spring attachment of its hinges that Clif could not readily get it ajar for a look beyond its threshold. The effort was somewhat disastrous, the door pressing and the step ladder giving. It was either be caught or drop, and Clif dodged the door and landed on the kitchen floor, thinking hard. "I get it! That picture up there is the secret entrance to the old pile beyond. I must hurry, for those Prescotts will return any minute now."

"As he heard voices and a barn door bang, he dove for shelter, blowing out the candle. He had noted a long cupboard. He had not examined it, but now as he opened the door and backed into it, he found that it was full of fishing tackle, nets and the like. Through a long crack in the door, Clif scanned father and son as they entered. An uglier mug than that of Jabez he had never seen. The old man carried a lantern and a basket of eggs. He growled, 'Where you s'pose that Faraday has gone?'

"You know as much as I do, dad."

"And the expense of your arrest! Your twenty dollar scheme was no scheme at all! Is Faraday onto Lane, onto us?"

"Jabez was scanning the floor. His eyes, flaring, followed a streak of little white dots. His father did not guess why. Clif Faraday did. They were drops of candle grease, and fresh, scarcely yet hard set.

"A vigorous rapping was heard at the front door of the wing, three rooms away.

"Let 'em knock," snarled Jabez. 'Let me be. I'd like tew know—'

"The candle drippings led right up to the cupboard door, and as Jabez walked toward it the rapping was repeated; just then, three rooms away though it was, a voice sounded sharp and clear:

"Open up here or we'll smash a way in!"

"Vic Rollins!" thought Faraday. His friends from the academy were looking for him. Things were thickening up, but Clif experienced a certain sense of relief at the bold challenge of his fellow cadets.

"The policemen!" gasped old Prescott. 'We're gone up!'

"Naw! Some of them academy boys, looking for Faraday. With what he knows, he mustn't get out of here."

"Where's he at?"

"Jabez, for answer, gave the cupboard door a wrench and there, cool as an icicle, Clif posed—a picture in a frame. But only an instant. His revolver had been taken from him in the barn, but he had spotted a long-handled maliet lying by the stove. He sidestepped fast, ducking away from the looming Jabez. When he was about four steps in the clear, Clif went jerking backward with dizzying force, as if attached to giant rubber bands, and banged against the wall.

"He knew in an instant what was the matter. When he closed the cupboard door he had backed into a fishing net set with minute bait fish-hooks. These had worked into his clothing and held him now at a dozen different points of his attire."

Jabez pounces on him and with his bear-like strength wrestles the cadet down. The elder Prescott helps his son bind Clif. To prevent the academy boys from breaking down the door, Jabez sends his father to quiet them with the promise he will let them search the house.

Says Jabez: "We either got to let Faraday loose and risk his dis-



turbing our plans—'

"No, no. Why we would be sent up for ten years for what we've done to him tonight."

"I'll get Faraday out of the way. Open that picture door up there."

"His father lending a hand up the ladder and through the hinged portrait, they finally land Clif Faraday on the roof, climbing up through the scuttle after ascending a winding stairway, the cadet carried like a sack of meal across Jabez's shoulder. The latter had the strength of a horse. He let Clif slide onto the roof and waited while old Prescott went back down through the scuttle.

"It was intensely dark, and a dense fog obscured chimneys not twenty feet away. Just then there was a distant but audible clatter—Clif's fellow cadets searching for him under Prescott's guidance. They just might come up through the open scuttle. Jabez immediately closed it.

"He walked hurriedly to the edge of the roof and looked down, standing near an old flagpole that ran up into the mist-laden air twenty feet above the roof, and Clif heard Jabez fumbling with its rope tackle. Under it was a box, and now the cover of this was kicked off.

"Well, if there ain't a flag,' blurted Jabez, 'or what's left of one. They'll never look up there even if they come up here, and if they did wouldn't be able to see anything.'

"He isn't thinking of hoisting me up there, I hope,' ran through Clif's mind.

"That was just what Jabez was thinking of. His fertile fancy had struck an idea that pleased him because it was unique. A gaping rent rag of a banner was spread out, Clif rolled into it, the bunting tucked under the bonds that already secured him.

"To his feet one end of the hoisting rope tackle was attached. Up, up the rope strained, the rotten old staff creaked. Up, up the blood began to rush to Clif's head and his courage fairly oozed. This was horrible! There he half swung, while Jabez disappeared through the trap aperture

The scuttle was drawn shut over him. Clif heard it locked; he was abandoned.

"This is desperate,' reflected Faraday. 'If I am left here long it will be my last—'

"A terrifying bend of the pole made Clif quake. The wind caught its hop-heavy bulk and he was swayed like the tail of a kite. When the blast subsided, Clif discovered something that disturbed him afresh. The staff was on a slant. There came another gust. With a tearing rip at its base the pole bent over at an angle of fully forty-five degrees and wavered there.

"So far it had dropped by slow stages. Suddenly a sharp snap cut the air; the last support had given way. Clif came down with a rush and struck the roof heavily. A quick thrill ran through him as his bonds loosened magically. His weight had bent the staff, it had broken eight feet from the top, and as Clif passed a jagged tin edge of the cornice had cut the strands, permitting the rope to unwind.

"It was no task at all to get free now he had the use of his hands. He flung the ancient bunting over the broken flagstaff. Escape to him now seemed a mere step after what he had been through. His friends were somewhere below. To appear and head them meant to strike terror to the souls of his enemies.

"As the echo of voices was wafted up to him Clif moved to the edge of the roof. 'They are going. They are gone. No use shouting now. I don't know as I care to anyway. It'll take some doing to get at this Lane's secret, if he has one, even with the coast clear.'

"Clif drew away from the cornice of the roof, for a fearful gust nearly took him over. The barns had shut out a vague, moving group—his fellow cadets going away satisfied that Clif was not in the building. He could see old Prescott, with a lantern in his hand, standing out in the yard, his hulking son Jabez by his side.

"Faraday decided now what he would do. That short end of the flag-



staff could be broken up, providing a formidable club. He would arm himself with it, and when Jabez poked his head through the trap door would hit that target with all his might. With the son knocked out, Clif would be in no wise fearful of tackling old Prescott alone. Then for Lane and the mystery.

"He started to secure the piece of the pole, but was halted by another of those tearing wind blasts. This one swept the roof like a broom. Over went the end of the flagstaff, carrying with it the ragged banner bundled up and caught in its splintery surface . . . It drove straight down as if shot from a mortar.

"It seemed to Clif it might strike near the Prescotts and he moved to the roof-edge and peered over. The diving pole fragment struck an extending trellis arm, shattered it, and, slightly deviating, aimed afresh for the ground. The crash caused the two prescotts to regard the descending mass with mouths agape.

"Say, dad," yelled Jabez, "it's him!"

"A strange resting place the diving projectile had found. Vague, rapid, yet familiar in outline to Jabez, it certainly appeared that a part of the pole and the captive he had secured there had shot past him. The next instant it was lost to view, for straight into an opening in the ground it dropped, was enveloped, swallowed up.

"Jabez ran out into the yard, looked up. 'It's so,' he gasped, missing the flagstaff aloft, 'the wind, the pole—'

"He snatched the lantern from his father's hand and ran to the opening that had engulfed the fallen object. It was an old abandoned well, and it must have been deep, for Jabez swung the lantern once over it, then bent his ear and listened. His face was pretty white as he set the lantern down and went to where a light platform for holding beehives rested on some logs. He dragged this to the aperture, flung it over so as to cover it, and faced his father, whose working features were as colorless as his own.

"Jabez, you don't mean—"

"Dad," Jabez said, "Faraday is down there! Accidents will happen. Besides, we must hurry up Lane and find some new diggings. I've had enough excitement for one night and I'm going tew bed. Yew best come, too."

"Clif Faraday went to the locked scuttle. 'I've got the field to myself now. The problem is to get down into this old barracks and locate the man those schemers have taken so much trouble to hide.'

"He found the padlocked trap was no easy task to open; in fact, he couldn't budge it, and exploring the roof, found some fallen chimney bricks had smashed a hole through the rotten old roof. Clif enlarged the aperture with his feet and finally crept into an attic space about three feet high. Rain that had poured in for years had warped and loosened the laths below, long since showering down the plaster beneath them.

"There must be a room underneath," said Clif, as he swung his feet down and dropped lightly and safely. Groping about he found a door, opened it an inch and faced a light beyond the minute crack. And Clif Faraday gazed on the queerest scene he had ever beheld in all his eventful career.

"The room into which Clif looked had a single article of furniture—an old billiard table. It was covered with hundreds and hundreds of eggs. The room had one living occupant — a hatchet-faced man with the bright eyes of an enthusiast.

"Faraday instantly set him down as Lane, the crippled boy's father. The man was intensely occupied. He was lifting carefully, one by one, the eggs from the basket Clif had seen old Prescott take through the picture door.

"On the edge of the table he had a marking brush and a pot of ink. Each egg on the table bore a peculiar mark; it resembled a monogram in some mystic language. This same symbol the man began impressing on the fresh eggs. Clif was fully as much puzzled as he was curious. The man before him was an undoubted



lunatic, but his systematic diligence and accuracy showed that he fancied he was up to something quite complicated.

"Clif was minded to watch him for a time before he intruded, but his hand, resting on the knob of the door at which he lingered, slipped a chance turn, and there was a click. The man must have had ears like a hare, for, slight as the noise was, he turned sharply, advanced to the door, pushed it quickly open and said:

"Who is there?"

"Clif had no time to retreat and the man made it easy for him by his next words. 'Ah!' he said, with a careless glance at Faraday's uniform coat. 'Come in. You're from the President, I see,' and turned back to his work, perfectly indifferent.

"This was undoubted Lane, the man he was seeking, and since Clif couldn't imagine the reason for Lane's occupation with the eggs, he ventured to remark:

"Well, and how does your experimental progress?"

"Lane faced him sharply. 'It's a surety, sir! You can tell the President so. He shall learn of my success the minute it is reached. And it is due at any time. Why, sir, everything in life is a lottery. Don't you know that? I shall not be impatient if I have to await the right combination.'

"What is the right combination?"

"The seventh egg of the seventh chicken, to be sure!" solemnly pronounced Lane.

"Yes?" encouraged Clif.

"Then they'll come around right."

"How right? And what are you putting that queer mark on all of the eggs for?" inquired Clif.

"Lane regarded Faraday pityingly. 'Any fool ought to know that—to hatch them, of course!'

"Faraday began to get an inkling of this man's phantasy. Lane imagined that if he could get the seventh egg of the seventh chicken, that cabalistic sign would act as an instantaneous incubator. Why, however, were the scheming, mercenary Prescotts encouraging this delusion; and that, too, at some considerable ex-

pense.

"Have you ever done it?" Clif asked.

"Sir," admitted Lane with dignity, 'I have not. But is it not a grand idea? I have spent hundreds verifying that symbol as authentic. The minute I succeed in my system, what does it demonstrate?'

"Clif shook his head.

"It proves, sir," asserted Lane excitedly, 'that if I can hatch an egg with the great symbol, I can hatch anything with it!'

"For instance?" Clif suggested craftily.

"Gold!" cried Lane, with flashing eyes. 'And listen, sir, the moment I demonstrate the eggs, I have the materials—' He stopped there and Faraday urged, 'Go on.'

"No!" Lane spoke fiercely. 'My brother-in-law is eternally pestering me to know also. No, sir! That is my secret, but wait! I will amaze, electrify, enrich the world!'

"Lane returned to his marking, but seemed to weary of it, passing a hand across his forehead several times. Faraday had noticed a couch in an adjoining room. He persuaded Lane to go in there and rest. While he thought over what Lane had told him he wondered if the Prescotts were greedy enough and stupid enough to coddle the man in the hope he could really produce something valuable. When Clif asked Lane if this 'material' of his was in the house, the demented man replied, 'Oh, no—not that near, but near enough. I arranged it all. The minute I succeed—ah! then to drop the eggs and turn out gold, gold!'

"When assured that Lane was sleeping, Clif stole out of the house—the Prescotts apparently were sunk deep in slumber since he heard nothing from them. It was just dawn as Clif returned. He bore a covered basket on one arm. Lane was still asleep as he entered. Cautiously Clif began breaking in the top of many of the decorated eggs on the table. Then he lifted a dozen or more faintly chirping little chicks from the basket, and placed them among the eggs.



"Faraday made a noise to awaken Lane and concealed himself back of the door to watch the result of his experiment. Lane shuffled into the gaslit room.

"Eureka! The word rang out like a clarion note. Everything depended on how Lane would take the apparent culmination of his illusionary hopes. Having discovered the chickens at once, he stood swaying after that ecstatic utterance, gloating over the 'success' of his system. Clif glided to his side, seeing the dangerous pitch of his excitement.

"Mr. Lane," he said, 'this demonstration—'

"The gold eggs, now! The—' A sudden spasm crossed Lane's face. For an instant his wild restless eyes seemed to pierce the veil that shadowed his mind. The shock prostrated him, he fell with a moan into Faraday's arms . . .

Lane lay like a log, and Clif was worried. His well-meaning efforts might have been miscalculated, with fatal results. He decided to hasten to the village and get a doctor, and left the house again without arousing the Prescotts. He suspected they had been imbibing heavily the night previous after the boys from the academy had departed.

"Clif returned with the doctor in his carriage. Having made his examination the physician said:

"This is a peculiar case, a shock of a certain reactionary nature that calls for skilled attention, that may terminate either way. He may arouse in his right mind, he may die. I am willing to take him to my own home and care for him, simply in the interest of science.'

"Clif was gratified at the proposition. He assisted in the removal of the insensible Lane. He was due at the academy with an explanation and the opportunity was now offered to go there. He had been considerably aroused by that interrupted allusion of Lane to 'the gold eggs,' but from the doctor's remarks he was inclined to think it might be several days before consciousness returned to the sufferer.

"I wish to tell you one thing," said Clif, as they reached the physician's home. 'Some mercenary relatives of this man may attempt to take charge of him if they locate him here.'

"Rest easy on that score,' answered the doctor. 'He shall not even be intruded on till he is better or worse.'

"Lane was made comfortable in a spare room at the doctor's. Clif was called back by the physician as he was about to start for the academy. 'You had better take charge of the man's papers,' he said, tendering a worn memorandum book.

"Cliff casually examined this as he passed down the road. The pages afforded no hoped-for inkling of Lane's past transactions that might have a bearing on the present, till Clif came to the last leaf in the volume.

"'Casting the gold egg ingots,' ran a line, and was cut off by erasure and pencil scratches. Faraday stood still in the middle of the road, engrossed in a maze of enlightening reflections.

"It is getting plainer to me,' he soliloquized. 'I think I understand the whole affair now. This poor fellow's wits went astray on the whimsical egg-symbol idea, he turned his money into gold, had it made into eggs, and has hidden these ready to hatch out. The Prescotts got onto the fact he really had gold . . . What is this line almost erased—'In the garden, ten paces from the pump! What garden, what pump?'

"The two fragmentary sentences were the only significant ones that rewarded the closest scrutiny of the pages of the memorandum book. The last mentioned directed Faraday's steps straight back to the old house where so much had happened. There was no doubt in his mind now but what there existed certain 'gold eggs.' As to their being secreted in the vicinity of this place all was surmise. If it had a pump, he'd try if 'ten paces' from it would turn up anything.

Clif reached the old house, seeing no sign of the Prescotts. It HAD a



pump, and the pump was in the rear yard.

"Ten paces—which way?" he questioned himself. He tried two directions without discovering any indication of the soil being recently or even remotely disturbed. His third effort landed him up against a sewer pipe. It was sunk a short distance in the ground, and, its top filled in with dirt, a few straggling vines trailed over.

"We will soon know!" Clif thought. He gave the pipe a tip. The dirt in which the vines were nested was not of any great depth, and must have been held in place by a shingle, a tin plate or something of that sort, for it moved easily and its bottom part was empty. Lying on the damp circular spot it had covered, Clif with widening eyes viewed a rich object. It was the shape of an egg. It was the size of a cocoanut. And it was made of gold—pure, solid gold! Eventually eight more of them were unearthed at this spot."

We are nearing the end of this Clif Faraday tale. The Prescotts got their hands on the naval cadet once more — nearly finishing his career with a buzz saw. They had never been able to locate the cache of "gold eggs" and barely escaped with their rascally lives in the end; "they vanished, to pester the district no more."

"The doctor in charge of Lane announced to Clif that the old man, now recovered, would never know of his queer pranks unless someone told him of them, for his reason had returned. Chauncey De Launcey, McPatrick and Kafoozelum made themselves decidedly scarce while the academy was ringing with the new story of the brave 'graduate of the Navy.' Clif did not mention their share in affairs openly, but they dreaded to meet his eye. The little crippled boy, of course, had to return to his father's charge.

"He looks heart-broken," remarked Vic Rollins, as Bessie Stuart resigned her guardianship.

"Yes, she charms them all," said gallant Clif Faraday, truthfully."

The End

## WANTED

Please quote any of the following Street and Smith paperback books:

- Carter, Nicholas — Fighting Against Millions  
 McDougall, W. H. — The Hidden City (Columbia Library)  
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 Royal, Mathew — The Unknown Island (Round the World Lib.)  
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## DIME NOVEL COLLECTOR'S BOOK SHELF

**SPORT, MIRROR OF AMERICAN LIFE**, by Robert H. Boyle. Little Brown and Company, 1963, 293 pages, \$6.00. (Now out of print). Contains an expansion version of Mr. Boyle's article that appeared in *Sports Illustrated* about Frank Merriwell. Excellent item for all dime novel collectors and especially so for Merriwell enthusiasts. (Information furnished by Frank Acker.)

## NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

P. J. Moran, who is now blind and unable to read or write, would like to know if any one as "Richmonds Sensational Series Novels," published originally in paper bound form, but which now is available in cloth bound copies. He prefers cloth bound copies. He intends to have these books read on a tape recorder after he purchases them. He would like to know what prices are on these books. Can any one help out a brother collector, who read these old timers before he lost his eyesight. Who can help him now. His address is, care of Francis J. Moran, 2040 Almond Ave., Concord, Calif. 94520.

Esther Forbes, author, died August 12th, 1967. She was a great author, and wrote such books as "Paul Revere and the World He Lived In," others including "Johnny Tremain" that was made into a motion picture by Walt Disney. She was 76 when she died.

Fred Reign, 35 E. Henryetta St., Baltimore, Md. 21200, loves his collection of old novels, old cigar store wooden Indians, old tobacco pipes, cigarette boxes and packages, and what not. He is trying to locate old mess tokens as used by our armed forces.

Miller Print Shop, Lawrence, Kans. 66044, is the printer of our dear old Roundup, and has been for a good many years. At one time he read the old time dime and nickel novels. I wonder if he reads them now. (I

wish I had more time to, as I have always liked the stories — detective and the Horatio Alger type, and westerns, in that order. I would like to buy a couple of hundred of "Fame

## WANTED

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and Fortune" and that type, in anticipating retiring some time in the distant future, and then having the time to read them. I had an ad to that effect in the Roundup recently, but evidently no one wants to sell. You ought to see me set the type on Mr. Leithead's excerpts from old novels—taint fair to look ahead to see how they come out—so I keep the linotype keyboard humming. I wish all the articles for the magazines we print were as interesting. Miller.)

On account of sickness some years back, Stanley E. Butcher had to get rid of 600 Secret Service and Nick Carters from his collection between 1903 and 1908. He is now trying to get back the ones he sold to fill in

his collection once more. He wants the Secret Service most of all, now. Will collectors who have any of the above write to Stanley.

Clyde F. Wakefield, 11 Lagrange St., Worcester, Mass. 01608 loves to collect the real old timers from 1860 up, especially the real rare ones. He is after certain old ten cent comic books before 1945.

Magnet Library #1208, "The Barrel Mystery, or By Whom and Why," by Nicholas Carter, page 23 mentions, "My name is John Foster, I don't live any where now, but my home used to be in Grafton, Massachusetts, a town near Worcester, I had a farm there, it wasn't the best farm in the world, Mr. Carter!

### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 288. Librarian, University of California at Santa Barbara, Cal. 93106 (New)
- 289. School of Library Science, University of Toronto, 167 College St., Toronto 2B, Ontario, Canada (New member)
- 290. Michael Campbell, 1182 Humboldt Avenue, Chico, Calif. 95926 (New)
- 291. Robert P. Burns, 1436 Beach Avenue, Bronx, New York 10460 (New)
- 292. William M. Smith, 1550 Manchester Road, Akron, Ohio 44314 (New)

### FOR SALE

- 18—Brave and Bold—all Gordon Keith—good average condition -- \$1.75 each
- 29—Army and Navy Weekly, good to very good condition—Mark Mallory at West Point and Clif. Faraday at Annapolis in every issue -- 2.00 each  
The above were formerly in the private collection of a member of the H. H. B. now deceased.
- 2—True Blue, No. 34, 42 ----- 2.00 each
- 4—Jeff Clayton Adventure Series, No. 46, 51, 54, 73—Westbrook-- 1.00 each
- 2—Jesse James Adventure Series, No. 17, 31—Westbrook ----- 1.00 each
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